

Transcendental Devotion (*anuttara-bhakti*): The Recognition of Deity as Self in the Nondual
Tantra of Abhinavagupta

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This paper comprises two sections. In the opening section I reflect on the semantic relation between “tantra” and “bhakti” asking the question, “To what data set do these Sanskrit signifiers refer?” In part two I turn to the case of one particular Tāntrika, the 11th Kaśmirī paṇḍita Śrī Abhinavagupta, and explore the place of bhakti in his Tantric work *Quintessence of Supreme Truth* (*Paramārthasāra*). My thesis is that for Abhinavagupta adoration, devotion (*bhakti*) serves the higher Tantric purpose of self-re-cognition (*svātma-pratyābhijñā*). As understood by Abhinavagupta, once the innermost Śiva Self is properly cognized then the Tāntrika’s chosen object of worship becomes the very same Self engaged in the act of worship. In this state of non-dual self-worship, lower forms of devotion give way to a gnostic revelation that is the experiences of consciousness rejoicing in its infinite capacity to reflect back upon itself its own irresistibly beautiful revelations.

I. A Question of Meanings and Data Sets

In order to discuss the relationship of Bhakti and Tantra, as this panel is designed to do, requires first that we consider the semantic fields of the terms we are using so that we can effectively apply them to the objective data set to which they theoretically apply. Bhakti derives from √bhaj meaning to “partake in” and “to receive one’s portion.” The word additionally implies “participation”, generally in the partaking of the nature or glory of the deity worshipped. These meanings coalesce through the singing of devotional songs (*bhājans*) and the partaking of sanctified food (*bhojana*) that are apportioned to the Bhākta so that she can partake in, literally consume, and thereby receive her portion of the body of the deity. Typically, so-called Bhakti movements are seen as arising in the post-Vedic period of the early first millennium C.E. in which epic poetry and the Purāṇa literature were being developed.

However, elements of *bhakti* can certainly be traced to Upaniṣadic and even early Vedic literature. If *bhakti* is about receiving one’s portion of one’s chosen deity then one could argue (as Timalisina, White and others have) that the very structure of Vedic literature has so-called *bhakti* elements in it. By the early centuries of the first millennium C.E. traditional self-identifying as or with “Bhakti” are flourishing all across India and across sectarian lines with Śaiva Nayanars and Vaiṣṇava Alvars in Tamil Nadu and later development in the North focusing, according to the context, on Kṛṣṇa, Śiva, or any one of numerous forms of the Devī. Each

particular instantiation comprised its own textual sources and liturgical practices and yet across sectarian divides there were common characteristics in theology and liturgy grounded in the notion that the individuals engaged in devotional practice were thereby partaking in the deity they adored, thereby becoming proximate to Him or Her, thereby being empowered by Him or Her and, ultimately, thereby receiving salvation from Him or Her. Perhaps the most fundamental dimension of Bhakti traditions is their alchemical core. Bhāktas seek to taste the nectar (*amṛta*) that is the sap (*rasa*) or soma that at once links ritual contexts to aesthetic contexts to yogic contexts to the core of Bhakti which is the *bhakti-rasa* that is the nectar of devotion in which deity grants Her highest blessing.

What then of Tantra? The term *tantra* derives from the verbal root \sqrt{tan} denoting “weaving”, “stretching” and “extension”. When combined with suffix ‘tra’ to form *tantra* the word renders as “that which interweaves, extends or stretches”. Like Bhakti tradition, the roots or seeds of the Tantric tradition can and have been traced back to the Vedas. According to S.C. Banerjee the earliest usage of the word Tantra is *R̥g Veda* X.71.9. However, like Bhakti, the tradition proper is generally believed not to have arisen until several centuries after the first millennium C.E. Numerous scholars have offered definitions of Tantra. Dyczkowski’s definition is perhaps the most succinct. Tantra, he once told me while we were sitting in his living room on Narad Ghat in Banaras (and elsewhere published), refers to those traditions, texts and practitioners who identify themselves by the term “Tantra”. Tantra in other words is a term of self-identification used by those initiated into and seeking to practice Tantra.

How then is Tantra distinct from Bhakti? Like Bhakti, Tantric traditions spread throughout India and include sects variously dedicated to Śiva, Viṣṇu, Gaṇeśa, various forms of Devī and a host of other deities (not to mention the numerous Buddhist and Jain forms of Tantra). And like Bhakti, Tantric practice includes the notion that one is partaking in worship of one’s chosen deity and receiving the nectar that liberates. On the ground Tantric and Bhakti traditions can and typically do look very much alike. And, in many cases they are in fact one and the same. Naturally, by partaking in one’s chosen deity one is interwoven into Him or Her; and, one is extended, stretched and thereby receives one’s true portion which is one’s deep interconnectivity with divinity. And, naturally, or innate to both Tantric and Bhakti traditions is a *habitus* of adoration toward that which extends you and which gives you a portion of itself for your ecstatic alchemical consumption.

If one were to assemble 10 Indologists and ask them to *venn* diagram the relationship of Tantric to Bhakti traditions you would likely get an array of results. It is unlikely that any of them would completely separate the respective circles representing Tantra on the one hand and Bhakti on the other, but each Indologist would perhaps depict the relationship with varying degrees of overlap. Some of these imagined Indologists may even prefer the use of concentric circles with either Bhakti containing Tantra or *vice versa*. Certainly, throughout much of Indian history one and the same individual has combined elements of Bhakti and Tantra in his or her respective Hindu tradition. One may be a Bhākta engaged in the repetition of Tantric mantras or one may be a Tāntrika engaged in devotional worship (*pūjā*). In many regions throughout the subcontinent and in the Hindu diaspora past and present it is certainly the case that at the level of popular cultural practice it is quite difficult and arguably unnecessary to parse out the layers of Bhakti from Tantra.

In terms of determining the interrelationship of the signified fields of *tantra* and *bhakti* it is perhaps best to examine their interrelationship in specific texts and contexts. In this regard in the remainder of this paper I turn to the writings of the 11th-century Kaśmirī polymath, Abhinavagupta. While my understanding of Abhinavagupta's work is informed by all of his translated primary texts as well as a large body of secondary literature, I herein am focused on my own published translation of his *Paramārtha-sāra* reading that concise text as a Tantric *paddhati* whose *rasa* is non-dual *bhakti*.

II. Adoration of the Supreme Power: Abhinavagupta's Tantric Devotion

The writings of Abhinavagupta (ca. 975-1025 C.E) present one context in which to reflect on the relationship of Tantra to Bhakti. Of his many extant works, I focus here on *Paramārthasāra* (*Quintessence of Supreme Truth*) which offers a succinct distillation of Abhinavagupta's literary and philosophical genius while also encapsulating the Tantrified dimensions of his own devotional practice and theology. The one-hundred-and-five verses of this composite text lay out the Śaivite vision of the universe as the unfolding of a unitary consciousness, called verily Supreme Śiva (*paramaśiva*), Supreme Sign (*parasamvit*), Consciousness (*caitanya*), Consciousness Power (*cit śakti*), and the Absolute (*anuttara*). In his *Quintessence*, Abhinavagupta maps out the enfolding of the Supreme Principle as thirty-six evolutes (*tattvas*) which are the manifold projection of a field of diverse objects upon a singular tapestry of divine

consciousness. It is by gazing into and adoring the infinite mystery contained in the crystalline mirror of this infinite tapestry that the Tāntrika tastes the rasa of the highest bhakti and thereby extends into herself as God consciousness Itself.

Abhinavagupta paramount exegetical agenda in the *Quintessence* is to affirm that Absolute Itself assumes the form of the limited human experiencer. Veiling Itself with the three cloaks (*trimala*), Paramaśiva assumes self-limitation (*saṃkocana*). Yet, this contracted experience is only temporary. As the 20th century Tāntrika Swami Muktananda liked to quip: From the Finite to the Infinite. That with measures (*antitvā*) assumes the immeasurable (*anantitvā*). By indoctrinating the initiate into an esoteric world of maṇḍala and mantra practice Abhinavagupta provides the technology by which the worshipped deity is subsumed as that Self which worships, making the Bhakta the deity through a cognitive act in which “self” is recognized as “cosmos”. This becoming-the-deity is the essence of Abhinavagupta’s tradition. It is an essence that conflates duality into a non-theistic non-duality in which adoration surrenders to realization.

The opening verse of the *Quintessence* crystallizes the Abhinavagupta’s non-theistic conception of the Trika-Kaula Absolute. Here, Abhinavagupta honors Śiva as the “one without beginning” who “dwells manifoldly in secret places” as “the receptacle of all.”¹ In other words, for Abhinavagupta his Deity is fundamentally inseparable from the embodied cosmos at its macro, micro and mesocosmic dimensions. Endowed with unlimited power (*śakti*) this Supreme Principle manifests infinitely without losing its essential unity. For this reason, the universe, though appearing apportioned, is in fact the singular flashing forth (*ābhāsa*) of the One. Abhinavagupta writes (*PS* 4-5):

This sphere (*aṇḍa*, cosmic egg) ...is brought forth by the Lord through the bestowal of his innate power and might. This universe with its succession of manifold bodies, organs and worlds is within these spheres; and therein is the enjoyer, the embodied śiva who assumes the condition of creatures.²

In this way Abhinavagupta’s deity exhibits his power to manifest distinctions within unity (*bhedābheda*). Just as a crystal remains untainted by the various hues it adopts, so this internally

¹ *Paraṃ parasthaṃ gahanād anādim ekaṃ niviṣṭhaṃ bahudhā guhāsu /
sarvālayaṃ sarvacarācarasthaṃ tvām eva śambhuṃ śaraṇaṃ prapadye* //1

² *Nijaśaktivaibhavaḥ parād aṇḍacatuṣṭhayaṃ idaṃ vibhāgena /
Śaktirmāyā prakṛtiḥ pṛthvī ceti prabhāvitāṃ prabhūṇā //4
Tatrāntar viśvaṃ idaṃ vicitratanukaraṇabhuvanasaṃtānam /
bhoktā ca tatra dehī śiva eva grhītapaśubhāvaḥ //5*

diversified singular Absolute remains non-dual despite its appearance in the form of “gods, humans, animals, and plant-life” (*PS*, 6). What makes Abhinavagupta a Tāntrika and not a Bhakta, then, is that his religious agenda is not simply to worship an Other but to go an additional step and to re-cognize his own self as the entity he formerly adored in prior dualistic states as a being to serve like a bound beast (*paśu*). For Abhinavagupta, in other words, worship serves the end of gnosis. And in this gnosis the one ultimately revered is the reverer herself.

In order to reach this higher, non-dual, non-theistic state the Tāntrika must reabsorb the projected cosmos within herself, returning the thirty-six evolutes or *tattvas* back to their point of origin in the transcendent pure consciousness beyond the sphere of manifestation. In reference to its transcendent-ness Abhinavagupta refers to the Absolute as the “thirty-seventh *tattva*” in the *TĀ*.³ This transcendent principle is the ocean of consciousness out of which creation arises. Abhinavagupta’s absolute embodies both consciousness (*caitanya*) and dynamism or *spanda śakti*. Acting as an inner pulse, this *spanda śakti* unfolds the universe of *tattvas* within its own being (*PS*, 10). Hence, in the Trika schema, the transcendent contains the manifest. And even during the time of cosmic manifestation, the supreme principle (*para-tattva*) remains “free of delusion, pure, peaceful and beyond creation and dissolution” (*PS*, 11).

This capacity for internal self-manifestation is illumined by Abhinavagupta through the use of a dialectic of shining and reflecting powers (*prakāśa-vimarśa-śakti*). In this way the Absolute embodies not only an illuminating consciousness, but also a reflective capacity for self-knowledge that replicates itself on all levels of manifestation. At the cosmogonic level, *prakāśa* is the first *tattva*, the *śivatattva*, and *vimarśa* is the second, the *śaktitattva*. These two, *śiva* and *śakti*, are understood to be the Lord (*īśvara*) and his consort, *devi*. In Tantric cosmogonic schemas the union of Śiva and Śakti gives rise to creation. Epistemologically situation, the union of these two principles forms the trinity of a knowing agent (*pramātr*) with the means of knowing (*pramāṇa*) which necessitates the need for a source of objective knowledge (*prameya*). Grounded in ritual, *Pramātr* is the worshipper, *Prameya* is what is worshipped and *Pramāṇa* is the means. Ritual grounds cosmic principles into tools that unleash the latent potentialities of the initiated Tāntrika to the point that she sees the universe itself as the maṇḍala she is trained by her Guru to worship.⁴ Cognized in this way the world itself, when properly understood, becomes a

³ *TĀ* 15.295c-328b. Translated by Sanderson (1986): 187.

⁴ *Svacchanda Tantram: Na Śivam vidyate kvacit*.

basis for a supreme adoration that is in essence the means by which Deity-as-Tāntrika recognizes Itself as the embodied cosmos. Indeed, the higher states of *sādhana* are said to consist in the awareness that the experience of the world constitutes a bliss that is tantamount to the experience of yogic *samādhi*.⁵

Abhinavagupta gives a potent metaphor for this extrovertive *samādhi* in his comparison of the relationship of the universe to the absolute with that of reflected images to a mirror:

Just as the images of a town, a village, and other objects reflected in a mirror appear inseparable from the mirror yet appear distinct both from one another and from the mirror, in the same way, arising from the absolute consciousness of Para Bhairava, this universe, though inherently void of divisions, nevertheless appears internally apportioned and distinct [from Para Bhairava] (*PS*, 12-13).

The mirror itself is Śiva, or pure illumination (*prakāśa*). Possessing within itself the capacity for revelation (*vimarśa*), the Śiva mirror contains a variety of reflected images, the *prameya*. The fact of their reflection, which is the means of their being perceived—hence, known—, is the *pramāṇa*, and the one gazing into the mirror is the knower (*pramātr*), she who projects the images to be known.

Now, what is the relationship between the three? The answer to this question is more nuanced than it first appears. On a surface level, the reflected images appear distinct both from one another and from the mirror. In other words, according to conventional reality, one would consider the knower, the known, and means of knowing all distinct. However, as Abhinavagupta states, conventional understanding has no basis at the level of the Supreme Truth (*PS*, 27). For this reason, the true relation of the three is stated to be one of non-portionality (*avibhāgin*). Developing this theme of non-portionality, Abhinavagupta goes on to equate the mirror with the absolute consciousness of highest Bhairava (*vimalatama-parama-bhairava-bodhaḥ*) who, both in terms of the metaphor and Trika cosmology, is the supreme knower (*pramātr*).

And, what is the relationship between Bhairava and the universe? Abhinavagupta answers that despite the appearance of being mutually apportioned and distinct (*vibhaktamābhāti*), the relationship of Bhairava (*pramātr*) to the universe (*prameya*) and its reflection (*pramāṇa*)—like that of the mirror to its objects—is one void of distinctions (*vibhāgaśūnyam*). In other words, from the highest perspective, the trinity of epistemological and cosmological principles is a unity. Like

⁵ ŚSū 1.19: *Lokānanda samādhi sukham*.

the various forms of candy which are but modifications of syrup, these three are but modifications of the Supreme Self (*PS*, 26).

I find this verse intriguing particularly for its repetition of words derived from \sqrt{b} haj all placed in negative inflections. Is Abhinavagupta here hinting that in the highest states of realization there is no need for bhakti? In a literal sense, absolutely. If *bhakti* means receiving one's portion then the highest realization within Abhinavagupta's system is certainly beyond a state in which a limited portion can be received. The receiving of a portion requires a dualism that in the highest stage of recognition simply vanishes.

II.1 *Bondage and Embodiment*

The purpose (*prayojana*) for writing the *PS* is clearly established by Abhinavagupta in the third verse where he explains that his treatise (*śāstra*) is written in response to the pleas of a disciple caught in the "wheel of suffering which begins with dwelling in the womb and ends with death." Living in a universe which is inherently devoid of distinctions, being the self-manifestation of omnipotent consciousness, how then can there be an occasion for bondage? Abhinavagupta answers that this condition paradoxically arises as the result of the absolute's power of freedom (*svātantrya-śakti*). In other words, it is precisely because Paramaśiva is unbounded that He/She/It can assume the condition of bondage.

In terms of cosmic emanation, the cause of bondage arises at the level of the sixth *tattva* (*māyā-tattva*). At this level, Consciousness is said to assume the capacity of self-limitation (*saṃkocana*) which makes possible the appearance of duality and multiplicity. The *māyā-tattva* is itself composed of five sheaths (*kañcukas*) which limit the functioning of the five powers (*pañca-śakti*) of the Pure Order (*śuddhādhvan*) (*PS*, 16). What results is the formation of the 'three taints' (*trimala*) which encase consciousness and transform it into a limited soul (*PS*, 24).

This limited soul is the twelfth principle, the *puruṣa-tattva*. In verse sixteen Abhinavagupta refers to the *puruṣa* as a "fettered beast" who, due to the influence of *māyā*, has contracted from the condition of pure consciousness (*bodhaḥ*) to that of a tainted soul (*malinas*). At this level of the cosmic hierarchy, the Supreme Self, "due to Its associations with the darkness of ignorance comes to perceive Itself as a wondrous diversity of subjects and objects." In other words, at the level of the *puruṣa-tattva*, there is a perceived split between self and other.

And at this stage there unfolds the twenty-four material categories of the classical Sāṃkhya schema, beginning with *prakṛti* and progressing through the threefold psychic instrument (*antaḥkaraṇam*)—intellect (*buddhi*), ego (*ahañkāra*), and mind (*manas*)—, the organs of knowledge (*buddhīndriya*)—the ear (*śrotra*), the skin (*tvak*) the eye (*cakṣus*), the tongue (*rasana*), and the nose (*ghrāṇa*)—, the organs of action (*karmendrīya*)—speech (*vāk*), hands (*pāṇi*), feet (*pāda*), anus (*payu*) generative organ (*upasthānam*)—, the five subtle elements (*tanmātra*)—sound (*śabda*), touch (*sparsa*), color (*mahāśa*), taste (*rasa*) and smell (*ghanda*)—, and, lastly, the physical sphere (*sthūla-viśayas*) constituted by the five material elements (*pañca-mahābhūtas*)—sky (*nabhas*), wind (*pavanas*), fire (*tejas*) water (*salilam*) and earth (*pṛthvī*) (PS, 19-22).

The result of this process is that consciousness takes the form of a body (*dehabhāva*) (PS, 23). In other words, according to the Trika, the final result of cosmic manifestation is embodiment. Hence, in this system, the body is both the product of creation and the receptacle of manifestation itself. Hence, the body contains within itself each of the thirty-six *tattvas*, and for this reason reflects the structure of the universe.⁶ Consequently, the *tattva* schema is to be understood simultaneously as a map of the universe and of the human being—the two, in Tantric circles, being inseparable.⁷

As we will see above, in the practices of Trika *sādhana* the homologies between the universe and the body play out on several levels. According to Abhinavagupta's Śaivism the body itself is not the cause of bondage. It is the final product of Paramaśiva's expansive power (*unmeśa-śakti*). The true source of bondage is the *malas* which encase the finite soul (*puruṣa*, *aṇu*) in ignorance (*avidyā*) and create the experience of cyclical existence or *saṃsāra*. In such a condition, the limited soul, “like a spider with its web, spins for itself a variegated pattern by means of association with the body, breath, perception, thought, knowledge and the expanse of ether” (PS, 32). In other words, while governed by the *malas*, the *tattvas* are an apparent source of bondage:

⁶ A detailed discussion of the correspondences between the universe and the body is found in Gavin Flood's recent work, *Body and Cosmology in Kashmir Śaivism* (San Francisco: Mellen University Press, 1993), esp. chapter 5 “Structures of the Body”, pp. 159-190.

⁷ Cf. Dimock's discussion of microcosm/macrocosm correspondences in *The Place of the Hidden Moon, Erotic Mysticism in the Vaiṣṇava-Sahajīya Cult of Bengal* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), On page 137 Dimock writes: “The essence of Tāntric thought is that man is a microcosm. He contains within himself all the elements of the universe; he is a part that contains all the elements of the whole.”

When the multitude of *tattvas* are unagitated the Lord likewise appears still; likewise is He exited when they are so and bewildered when there is the state of bewilderment. However, in actuality, from the [perspective of the] Highest Truth He is not these conditions (*PS*, 38).

The last line of the above verse is key to understanding the Trika conception of bondage. It suggests, that ultimately, the entire notion of limitation is a cosmic joke, or play (*līla*). In the final analysis, Śiva is never bound, and in the moment of this re-cognition (*pratyabhijñā*), the *sādhaka* is awakened. At that point the body becomes the temple of god (*devagrha*) and delusion is shattered. Then, there is the condition of embodied liberation (*jīvan-mukta*). Hence, for the Trika śaivite, death is not a prerequisite for final release (*videha-mukta*).⁸ Knowledge alone is necessary, for in the moment of awakening there is the understanding that śiva alone unfolds the drama of bondage and release:

He (the *sādhaka*) would free his own Self from bondage by means of the splendor of the greatness of self-knowledge. Thus, the Supreme Śiva unfolds the drama consisting of the wonders of bondage and liberation. (*PS*, 33).

Paradoxically, this moment of re-cognition, this condition of knowing, often requires ritual practices (*karman*) to produce a condition of purification in which pure knowledge can arise. Consequently, the Trika *sādhana* system enjoins the combining of knowledge and action (*jñānakarmasamuccayavāda*) as a means to freedom. In defense of this position, the Abhinavagupta defines the absolute as constituted of a triadic power: will (*icchā*), knowledge (*jñāna*), and action (*kriyā*).

II.2 The Dimensions of *Sādhana*

Trika theology describes this world as the self-manifestation of an omnipotent and dynamic consciousness. Logically, then, as we have seen, bondage is an impossibility, an illusion or mirage. Yet, there is the experience of suffering and consequently the need for a method (*upāya*) which brings about the dissolving of the mirage of ignorance. Herein, enters the essential features of Tantra--an elaborate technology of self-release based on an acute science of the body (*dehavidyā*). Within this system abstract philosophical inquiry, as found in the initial sections of

⁸See SenSharma's analysis of *jīvan-mukta* vs. *videha-mukta* in *The Philosophy of Sādhana* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1990), 67-68.

the *PS*, forms part of the means to liberating knowledge (*jñāna*).⁹ In other words, descriptions of the *tattvas*, the nature of the cosmogonic process, etc., serve not only to satisfy intellectual curiosities but, finally to produce an existential awakening and release. And this condition, the Tantras declare, requires “active ritual participation leading the aspirant to experiential knowledge (*bhāvanajñāna*).”¹⁰

Hence, for the initiated *sādhaka*, the *PS* is to be understood not as representing a philosophical stance to be agreed or disagreed with, but as a guideline for acquiring experiential knowledge that was disseminated within guarded circles of initiation and secrecy. Initiation (*dīkṣā*) was understood to be the *sine qua non* of proper textual exegesis, since it was only through this consecration that the *malas* could be removed. Through *dīkṣā* came the descent of power (*śaktipāt*) which made possible the revelation of the Self. “As the face is revealed in a spotless mirror,” writes Abhinavagupta, “so This (Self) is revealed as light in the mind purified by *śaktipāt* (PS, 9).”

This initiatory transmission was believed to awaken the aspirant's own dormant power, the *kuṇḍalinī śakti*, which, when awakened arose through the central current (*suṣumna nāḍi*), purifying the latent tendencies (*saṃskāras*) and uniting the *sādhaka*'s limited identity with that of cosmic identity situated at the crown of the head in the *sahāsrāra*. This path of internal ascension was called the upward yoga (*udmukhyayoga*) and was considered the distinctive feature of the Kaula school. In mythological terms, the upward path was the upward face of Śiva's five-faced icon (*pañca-mukha-līṅga*). This path removed all ignorance and established the *sādhaka* in the highest state of empowerment through the shredding of the *malas*:

As the chaff surrounding the rice grain seems inseparable and yet is removed, so this (=the *trimala*) is shed by the upward yoga of the path of *śaivism* (PS, 18).

For one to enter the path of upwards yoga, the essential prerequisite was the meeting with a qualified master (*satguru*). Contact with the teacher was understood to produce an alchemical process of transformation which liberated the disciple from all impurities (PS, 17). Under rare circumstances, the empowerment received from the *guru* was so intense (*atītivraśaktipāta*) it would produce instant enlightenment and the *sādhaka* would become “Śiva Himself” (PS, 96).

⁹ See Brook's discussion of the interrelation of philosophy and practice in his *Secret of the Three Cities, An Introduction to Hindu Śākta Tantrism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), esp. 49.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 49.

More often, however, liberation occurred gradually (*kramamukti*) through “ascending the steps of the latter [of *tattvas*]” (*PS*, 97).

III. Conclusion

In section I of this essay I pointed out that Tantric and Bhakti traditions share similar origins and are deeply intermingled throughout their respective, interwoven histories. In some cases one may be more dominant over the other, but rarely are they entirely distinct fields of meaning of practice. If a Bhākta desires to receiver her “share” then she does so often through means that are akin to the way that a Tāntrika seeks to extend or be stretched or interwoven. Bhakti and Tantric traditions are numerous and richly intermingled throughout the Hindu world and they have been for at least 1500 years if not longer. Going beyond these general reflections in section II I reflected on the role of devotion in Abhinavagupta’s own Tantric tradition, as articulated through his *Quintessence of Supreme Truth*. Therein I attempted to show that for Abhinavagupta bhakti serves and is subsumed by a state of self-recognition in which the one worshipping realizes that she herself is that which she worships. In such a state devotion gives way to re-cognition and in re-cognition one receives the blessings of the Trika path: the empowering awareness that there is no other to worship. There is only the Self. And the Self Itself is at one the object of love, the means of loving and love itself.

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